

Smith, can you accommodate me to-night with some—by the by, where is Mr. Smith himself, I have not seen him yet, have I? eh!—never missed him till now.”

“I wish, Mr. Bell, you would be so kind as to get the plaster over our bed mended, it is so cold whenever it blows that I am almost afraid to sleep for fear of catching cold; now do, Mr. Bell, that’s a dear,” quoth Mrs. Timothy Smith, endeavouring to ward off Mr. Bell’s solicitation.—Mr. Bell began to survey the wood fire on Mrs. Timothy Smith’s hearth with great curiosity and attention, as if he was examining a novel and interesting experiment in chemistry, much to the terror of Mrs. Timothy Smith, who now began to think that something must be wrong either with the fire, hearth, or andirons; she consequently began to look to see it were possible there was anything wrong; now Miss Rebecca’s curiosity being, by the actions both of Squire Bell and her mother, greatly excited, she bent down her head, and by a careful examination, after the manner of a jewel hunter, began to scrape, rake, and look from one end of the hearth to the other. Mr. Bell, who had only been watching the drops of sap that issued from the end of a log, was, by the proceedings of his tenants, quite confused; he looked, but could perceive nothing extraordinary in or about the fire;—the more Mr. Bell looked, the harder Mrs. Timothy Smith looked, as also Rebecca, her daughter.

A terrible noise in the street broke up the party from their researches, Miss Rebecca flew to the window, followed by her mother, while Mr. Bell perhaps guessing the cause of the tumult, sat quiet and contented by the fire.

“O, mother,” said Miss Rebecca, gazing from the window with wondering eyes; “O, mother, some person’s agoing to jail I do declare.”

“You don’t say so,” replied Mrs. Timothy Smith.

“They have took him tother way,” said Miss Rebecca, straining her eyes against the glass, in order if possible to get a glimpse at the prisoner.

“I declare it is a shame,” said Mrs. Timothy Smith, sitting down again by the fire, the crowd before the window having dispersed, or followed the prisoner; “I declare it is a shame,” continued she, “to take any poor man to jail. If I was king no one should go to jail if I could help it.”

“Nor if I was either,” said Miss Rebecca Smith, seating herself also upon her chair by the fire.

Mr. Bell gave as his opinion, that it was a downright shame to deprive a freeman of his liberty, because he cannot pay what he has not got, and if he, Mr. Bell had the management of things, which unluckily for the country’s weal he has not, he would look more into the affair before he would clap any man into confinement; and Mr. Bell also expressed great indignation against unfeeling landlords who sell their poor tenants furniture, and clap them into jail for the paltry affair of swelling their own pockets; and much to the relieving of Mrs. Timothy Smith’s mind, Mr. Bell declared upon his solemn oath, that he never yet put any man to trouble concerning any little debt, and it was his full intention and determination never to do so; and he farther added that as he had often said, so he determined to keep his word; and moreover he said that curses ought to be doomed and thundered down upon them who would do the like.

Mr. Bell was cut short in his charitable and humane determination, by the entrance of Master Timothy Smith, jr., who said to Mr. Bell, “that they had done the thing primely for him outside there.”

“Done what?” said Mr. Bell, with a face of camelion variation of tints spreading over it, varying from a yellowish brown its natural colour, to a pale yellow, thence assuming a milkish tint, and finally settling down to that of a dark crimson brown.

“They have got him,” said master Timothy.

“Got who?” asked a chorus of three voices at once.

“Your tenant,” said Master Timothy to Mr. Bell, with a coffee-house-corner sort of a look, “he’s in the brig behind the court house now; they did it primely for you, Mr. Bell.” Mr. Bell appeared confused—Mrs. Timothy Smith declared that she would like to hear the particulars of a thing which appeared so romantic to her.

Now Master Timothy Smith was somewhat indebted to the intoxicating draught for his fine spirits, and which helped to lengthen his tongue, that at another time would not have been so communicative.

“Why,” said Master Timothy—“why the devils of constables finding the street door locked, opened one of the front windows, and one of the devils entered thereby, and——”

“Damages! action of damages!” cried Mr. Bell, starting from his chair, and rushing from the apartment, telling the astonished inmates as he slammed the door, that he was a ruined man; but that at all events he would be back